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NIGERIA | At Least 200 Killed in Terrorist Violence

At least 200 people were killed in Borno and Adamawa States in the north east of Nigeria in a series of terrorist attacks on rural areas last week.

At least 121 people died and several others were injured when Boko Haram gunmen attacked Izghe Village in the Gwoza Local government Area (LGA) of Borno State on Feb. 15.

According to survivors, gunmen dressed in military fatigues and chanting Allahu Akbar (God is great) arrived at the largely Christian community at night in seven pick-up trucks and on motorcycles. They ordered villagers to gather together and then opened fire, chasing and killing any who attempted to escape and slitting the throats of several victims. The gunmen subsequently set fire to houses, looted food stores and stole approximately 10 vehicles.

According to local reports, Boko Haram gunmen carried out attacks on other villages in both Borno and Adamawa States on the same day, including Kirchang, Kwambula, Shuwa, Dagu, Yinagu, Bitiku, and Yazza. While casualty figures from other villages are unknown, a survivor from Yazza informed local media he counted 25 corpses before he escaped.

The assault on Izghe is the latest in a series of terrorist attacks on villages since January and came three days after the Nigerian Air Force began daily aerial bombardments to flush the sect out of its hideouts in the nearby Sambisa Forest on the Cameroonian border. At least nine soldiers and an unknown number of militants died in a fierce and prolonged gun battle that followed the bombardment on Feb. 12.

On the evening of Feb. 11, Boko Haram gunmen launched a four-hour attack on Konduga in Borno State, destroying around 70% of the town, including homes, schools, clinics and the central mosque. They reportedly took hostage 20 young women from a local college. The death toll in the Konduga attack rose to 62 after four people died in hospital and five bodies were found in the bush. On Feb. 13, the gunmen reportedly attacked Konduga again, hours after a condolence visit by the Shehu of Borno, but were repelled by a combined force of soldiers and members of the youth vigilante group, the Civilian Joint Task Force (Civilian-JTF). Prior to this, the sect had attacked Mailari Village, situated around six miles from Konduga, where they burnt homes and shops. Boko Haram gunmen also launched an attack on Wajirko Village, also in Borno State, killing four people, injuring an estimated six people, and destroying up to 50 homes.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed in these senseless attacks. While the efforts of the Nigerian military to tackle Boko Haram's presence in the border areas with Cameroon are

to be welcomed, we echo local calls for a surge in numbers in order to stem the sect's violent campaign in rural areas, which remain soft targets. Nigeria is a strategic nation, thus it is vital that members of international community render every possible assistance to enable the country to counter this growing threat to peace and security in the region. It is also important for neighboring states to assist by reinforcing security on their borders and denying Boko Haram a hiding place as a matter of urgency."